

## How to Solve the Reunion Problem

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*The Month*

NOWADAYS one can hardly pick up a serious monthly review, or any of the more expensive weeklies, without coming across an article, sometimes more than one article, bearing on the problem of Christian reunion. Even the illustrated Sunday papers take an interest in the matter, and from time to time provide their readers with solutions to the problem furnished by people who are held to be mouthpieces of public opinion. The general impression is that all this seeking and striving after unity in religious matters is something begotten of the World War, part of the general reaction away from strife and discussion in favor of universal peace. The Bishops of Peterborough, Zanzibar, and Hereford, whilst rejecting the "very common assertion that this change [from the stage of pious aspirations to that of practical politics] is due mainly to the war," nevertheless assign a very recent origin to the movement towards reunion. In their opinion "the year 1910 will possibly come to be regarded by the historians of the future as the *annus mirabilis* of the movement," because of the Missionary Conference at Edinburgh which imparted to the movement an impetus from abroad, and also because of the Resolution of the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church, held at Cincinnati, Ohio, in the United States of America, in October of the same year, which provided for the establishment of a Joint Commission to arrange for a World Conference on Faith and Order. Again, the first of the "Documents bearing on the Problem of Christian Unity and Fellowship," gathered together for the convenience of those considering the subject of Christian reunion at the time of the recent Lambeth Conference, dates back no further than 1916.

In all this there is a tendency to ignore the past and to treat reunion as though it were a new, instead of an old, problem. As a matter of fact, the Reformation had hardly set in before its chief architects, the very pioneers of disruption, assumed the role of champions of religious

unity. Cranmer's ideal of "a true Catholicism throughout all Europe" differs little, if at all, from the "ideal of a united and truly Catholic Church" commended in their Encyclical Letter by the Bishops assembled at Lambeth as affording "a new approach to reunion." Ever since Cranmer's day principles of disruption and aspirations for unity have gone hand in hand in this country, possibly because, as Mr. Belloc somewhere suggests, the English people lost the tradition of clear thinking at the Reformation. However that might be, in the centuries that have elapsed there have been innumerable theories of reunion put forward by men of good-will who have striven to effect some kind of compromise between Catholic and Protestant principles. These various efforts, it seems to me, may be classified roughly under three broad headings: 1. There is, first of all, the appeal to the undivided Church of antiquity. 2. There is, secondly, the appeal to what may be described as the least common denominator of Christian belief at the present moment. 3. There is, finally, the appeal to the living consciousness of Christendom and to inner experience. I propose briefly to examine these three theories before approaching the problem from the Catholic standpoint.

### "THE UNDIVIDED CHURCH"

1. The appeal to the undivided Church of antiquity.\* As an advocate of this method of approach to the problem of reunion we cannot select anyone more thoroughly representative than Bishop Gore. Thus in his "Basis of Anglican Fellowship" (p. 50) he says: "To accept the Anglican position as valid, in any sense, is to appeal behind the Pope and the authority of the medieval Church

\*In fairness to the propounders of this theory I adopt their phraseology whilst protesting against its implications. The expression "the undivided Church of antiquity" implies that there is no undivided Church of today, and lends color to the concept of a number of partial expressions of the Christian ideal as legitimately constituting, in their totality, a divided Church of Christ. Such a concept obscures the real effect of heresy and schism, which is not to divide the Church, but to divide sectaries from the Church. In Catholic doctrine there is no place for the concept of a divided Church. Unity is an essential mark of the Church of Christ which consequently always was, is, and will be, undivided.

which developed the Papacy to the undivided Church, and with the undivided Church to Scripture as limiting forever the articles of faith to the original creed."

Now there is something very seductive about this appeal to an undivided Church of long ago until one asks the question: what was this undivided Church of antiquity? when did it exist? and when and why did it cease to exist? Here at the outset, in answer to the question what was the undivided Church of antiquity, it will be well to clear away a common misconception. It is assumed by many that there was a time when all who professed themselves Christians did actually keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. As a matter of historical fact there never was such a time. Even in St. Paul's day there were incipient sects amongst the Corinthians, to whom he found it necessary to address the startling question "Is Christ divided?" (I Cor. i. 12, 13). From the outset the Church was distracted by the weird and wild speculations of Ebionites, Gnostics and Encratites. A complete list of the heretics and schismatics who cut themselves off from the Church of Christ prior to the first General Council of Nicæa would be a lengthy one. To mention only a few of the more notorious, there was Saturninus who perverted the Scriptures with his innumerable commentaries, and Basilides who denied the humanity of Christ. Before the middle of the second century Valentinus from Egypt and Cerdo from Syria were propagating their errors in Rome. A little later came Apelles, Potitus, Basiliscus and Synaros, each with no mean following. There were, too, Adoptionists and Monarchians, and later Sabellians with their errors on the doctrine of the Trinity, and Montanists with their rigorous views on the remission of sin. There were Marcionites, Novatians and some seventy different sects of Manicheans, all striving to rend the seamless robe of Christ, before the Council of Nicæa.

The appeal, then, is not being made to an actually undivided Christendom, since there never was such a thing. To what then is it being made? In reality it is being made simply and solely to the early Councils of that great historic Church which, whatever else it did, unhesitatingly denounced and excommunicated heretics throughout the ages. That right is conceded to the Church fully and

freely in the matter of denouncing heretics who no longer exist—in her condemnation of Gnosticism and Manicheanism she wins the universal applause of Christendom. But as soon as the Church touches live issues that self-same right is denied her, and a time-limit is set to her powers. Though the Church was from the first invaded by innumerable heresies, apparently she is to be considered immune and intact until a heresy appears which has some affinity with the teaching of one or other modern religious body. Consequently we receive very different answers to the very pertinent question, when did the Church cease to be undivided?

1. Some, who accept the decrees of the Council of Chalcedon, place the division at the sixth Ecumenical Council in 681. 2. More generally the line is drawn at the Council of Chalcedon itself in 451. 3. Others, with the Copts and Armenians, say the Church ceased to be undivided at the Council of Ephesus in 431. 4. Others again, with the Nestorians, declare that it ceased to be undivided at the Council of Nicæa, and we have the authority of Dr. Jowett for the statement that a distinguished Anglican prelate once declared that the decisions of Nicæa were the greatest calamity that had ever befallen the Church of God."

It is impossible then to get any general agreement as to when the Church was undivided. Even so, we may proceed to ask a further vital question: in what sense do those who appeal to the undivided Church accept the decisions of what they regard as the undivided Church? What, for instance, does Bishop Gore mean when he lays it down that "The dogmatic decisions of the undivided Church about the person of Christ have been truly inspired by the Spirit of Truth?" Does this mean that the decisions are to be accepted as final and binding? One would have thought so, had not his Lordship proceeded to elucidate his meaning. He is careful to add: "These decisions are to be regarded as primarily negative . . . ; they leave us always in the position of men who go back for their positive information about the person of Our Lord chiefly to the picture in the Gospels, and the interpretation of the Apostles." That is to say, his Lordship accepts the decisions of the undivided Church as be-

ing Divinely inspired, but nevertheless holds himself free to interpret them in the light of his own understanding of the Gospels and the teaching of the Apostles. This surely is a curious way of accepting decisions, a subjective method which can lead only to further divisions and subdivisions amongst those who practise it. It would seem, then, that the appeal to the undivided Church of antiquity is not likely to furnish us with a satisfactory basis for reunion, since, in the first place, there is no general agreement as to when the Church is supposed to have become divided, and, secondly, because the decrees of even the earliest Councils are accepted with reservations of such a character as to render the acceptance "not negotiable."

#### "THE LEAST COMMON DENOMINATOR OF BELIEF"

2. We may now proceed to consider the appeal to the least common denominator of current Christian belief. This popular idea has many popular exponents who present it in attractive guises. At one time we heard a great deal of the need for a "common platform," but following in the wake of the League of Nations came the inevitable proposal for a league of churches. Thus, Canon Streeter, writing in the *Daily News* four years ago, said: "The time is ripe for a league of churches, and if organized Christianity is to make any contribution to the problems of our time, it must be formed." One fancies that the analogy between politics and religion, which at first gained favor for the proposal, ultimately gave it its death-blow. It is impossible to close one's eyes to the fact that politics, even in the wider sense of Aristotle, are concerned with establishing relations which are essentially temporary, and largely, if not wholly, pragmatic; whereas religion is, or ought to be, concerned with the eternal and the true. The man in the street feels that in religion, at all events, it ought not to be a case of "nothing continueth in one stay." There he does expect to get a firm foothold of some kind. Hence the frank and open proposal for a round-table conference of churches committed only to the principle of barter and exchange has found little or no favor with people to whom religion is a reality. The proposal is more attractive when the principle is some-

what disguised. The recent Lambeth Conference furnishes a good instance of this tortuous method of approach. The pith of the conference may be stated in the words of Dr. Headlam: "The Church of England has definitely stated that it is prepared not to insist upon any other formula except the Nicene Creed, it gives up as unnecessary either the Thirty-nine Articles or the Athanasian Creed." Here, though a dogmatic stand is taken, the principle underlying the statement is again that of barter and exchange. It is a case of *do ut des*, as witness the reception of the proposal by a well-known Congregationist, who declared at the Geneva Conference last summer that "The Church of England has reached the last limit of concession which can be expected, and may reasonably ask that other religious bodies should receive their proposals in the same spirit of faith and good-will in which these have been made." But where is the guarantee that the last limit of concession has been reached? Who is to say that the whittling down process will not continue at future Lambeth conferences? The effect of this most recent concession has been stated succinctly by one who is in full sympathy with the proposal and eminently qualified to speak: "Anglicanism as a model is dead," declares the Bishop of Zanzibar. And every religious body which enters into the scheme must merge its identity in mutual concession, possibly to the vanishing-point of all Christian belief.

#### THE NICENE CREED WILL HARDLY DO

Certainly there is no finality in the particular basis of reunion selected by the Lambeth Conference, the Nicene Creed. It is not, and was never intended to be, an epitome of Christian doctrine. "Bible Christians" will point out that the Nicene Creed says never a word with regard to the authority of the Scriptures, or the nature and extent of inspiration; on the other hand neither does it exact belief in a Divinely appointed episcopate, the priesthood or the Sacramental system. Are all these vital points to be waived simply because they find no place in an ancient creed which was drawn up to meet the needs of an epoch when Christians were united on many of the questions which are most hotly disputed

at the present day? By many it is tacitly assumed that the Nicene Creed is a complete presentation of Christian belief in the year 325 A. D. Yet it is difficult to understand how any serious student of history can make such an assumption. To the Nicene Creed in particular we may apply the profound saying of Abelard with regard to theology in general, that it owes its development to the challenges of the heretics, without which it would never have reached its firmness and precision. No one can doubt that the Nicene Creed would have been different had the third and fourth centuries been distinguished by controversies as to the nature and constitution of the Church, instead of by Christological controversies. For the simple reason that the Nicene Creed does not touch many of the most vital issues of the present day it is useless as a basis of reunion. Surely there is no religious body laying claim to the name Christian which does not, in its own sense, subscribe to the Nicene Creed already. Obviously it is not the creed, but the interpretations of the creed, which matter, unless agreement between the different religious bodies is to be merely on paper. Even taking the Nicene Creed as a basis, we are forced back upon the necessity of some living voice to interpret it, and to interpret it in the light of ever-increasing scientific and philosophical knowledge.

To the Catholic mind there is a fundamental misconception underlying all such proposals. If, indeed, Christianity is a Divinely revealed religion, as it professes to be, it follows that Christians are not at liberty to bargain and barter amongst themselves as to how much, or how little, of that revelation they shall accept. Though her position be strictly logical, the finality of the attitude of the Catholic Church towards revealed truth is, in many quarters, either not sufficiently recognized or sadly misunderstood. Thus, the Bishops of Peterborough, Zanzibar, and Hereford, in their brochure, "Lambeth and Reunion," say:

With regard to the Roman Church nothing more can be recorded than a change of personal relations. The position is summed up in the words describing the reception by the Pope of the deputation visiting Europe and the East on behalf of the Commission of the World Conference on Faith and Order. The

Pope "received us most cordially. He answered most distinctly. The contrast between the Pope's attitude towards us and his official attitude towards the conference was very sharp. The one was irresistibly benevolent, the other irresistibly rigid" (p. 29).

Here, as elsewhere, there is no recognition of the fact that the rigidity is not a matter of choice or of policy, but, from the standpoint of Catholicism, as much a matter of necessity as the rigid attitude of every sane man towards the multiplication table. As yet, in this country, many zealous workers for reunion have not grasped the fact that the principle of barter and exchange in doctrinal matters, however attractive it may sound to English ears, is positively blasphemous to those who believe that no one has a right to tamper with the deposit of revealed truth. We, at least, hear ringing in our ears the charge of St. Paul: "Keep that which is committed to thy trust" (I Tim. vi. 20).

#### THE APPEAL TO CHRISTIAN CONSCIOUSNESS

3. There is, in the third place, the appeal to Christian consciousness, to inner experience, and to the subjective values of Christianity. Those who advocate this method of the inner approach insist that if formulæ unite they also divide, and that consequently they are better eschewed. Thus, Canon Bindley, at the Modern Churchmen's Congress at Cambridge last summer, said boldly: "We need to find out, not a formula, but a temper—not a creed, but a faith—which is common to all, and which underlies all, and supports all, and inspires all." We are reminded of Huxley's famous dictum. "Agnosticism is not a creed, but a method," and in both cases it is a method which leads inevitably to doubt and disbelief. The aim of reunion, we are told, is to include, not to exclude, and hence says Canon Bindley: "We need a confession of faith in which the essentials are implicit, rather than a creed which attempts to make them explicit." Definition is to be avoided as trammeling freedom of thought and lowering subjective values.

It is generally recognized that the last twenty years represent something more than the conventional dawn of a new century. Already a new spirit, elusive and perplexing, is discernible in life and literature. It is difficult to



describe and impossible to define, but if the thirteenth century stands out as the golden age of metaphysics, and the seventeenth as heralding the reign of the physical sciences, we may perhaps not inaptly describe the present as a psychological age. No longer is psychology "the Cinderella of the sciences," rather is she the Queen of the Muses. There is a psychology not merely of life, but of art, literature and music—and there is, too, a psychological, or pseudo-psychological, method of approaching all religious problems. As an illustration of it I may perhaps be permitted to cite the following passage from a speaker at the Cambridge Congress:

Experimental psychology could render most important service to Christian theology if it could show us how to make contact, to use William James' phrase, with the spirit of God. Until we have such knowledge every aspect of the interaction of the human and the Divine will be a mystery. I imagine that our ignorance in this region has caused us to avoid questions concerning reconciliation, redemption, salvation. I regret the omission, because such matters are central to Christian experience.

Apparently we are to despair of acquiring an adequate knowledge of Christian teaching until such time as empiric psychology has attained a much fuller development. Are we to discount the theology of Augustine, Anselm and Aquinas because they lacked proficiency in experimental psychology?

But whither is this method of the inner approach leading? The answer is not far to seek. Apparently every article of the Creed is to be translated into terms of personal consciousness, and accepted only insofar as it finds any warrant in that consciousness. In this way even the Divinity of Christ is rejected, and historic Christianity tumbles to the ground a mass of ruins. But that is not all. This introspective method, with its semi-deification of human consciousness, has led to a pseudo-mysticism, the direct outcome of which is pantheism. The belief even in a personal God is disappearing at the bidding of this modern appeal to consciousness. Obviously this method of approach to the problem of reunion can lead only to a unity of negation—the negation of every article of the Christian creed.

## THE ONE HOPE OF REUNION

4. Is there then no hope of Christian reunion? I am sanguine enough to think that there is, but that it must be sought on different lines. In the first place, instead of aspiring after an ideal unity, I would ask you to contemplate the very real diversity which exists amongst us. At a very modest estimate we will suppose that there are a hundred different religious bodies in England today. If you went back a hundred years there would hardly be more than fifty. If you went back another hundred years you would find a proportionate decrease, whilst if you went back to Luther's day, you would find only two: the old historic Church and the new comprehensive church which had broken away from it. Now I am going to ask you to go back a little further than that. I am going to ask you to go back to the days prior to Martin Luther, when as a matter of fact you will find only one historic Church. I ask you to go back to the thirteenth century, and seek there a basis of Christian unity. That basis, it seems to me, you will find in the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas.

To most people he is merely a name, or at best the author of the "Summa." But the "Summa," masterpiece as it is, is only one portion, less than half, of his voluminous writings. St. Thomas's intellectual preoccupation was with philosophy, and in meeting the challenges of heretics he is always at pains to refute them from the standpoint of reason. If I were to summarize in a sentence the achievement of Aquinas I would say that he translated with common-sense realism the doctrines of Christianity as vindicated against heretics in previous centuries. Consequently his works constitute a masterpiece setting forth the complete accord between reason and revelation. On this point I will content myself with quoting the remarkable words of a great non-Catholic scholar, Dr. Wicksteed. In his Hibbert Lectures on "The Reactions between Dogma and Philosophy Illustrated from the Works of St. Thomas Aquinas," he says:

The conditions under which St. Thomas Aquinas undertook his great synthesis of dogma and philosophy combined with the special characteristics of his genius, constantly invite us to step beyond the limits of his own creed and church; for his works

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present us with luminous examples of phenomena common to all advanced religious evolutions. They teach us to recognize the same underlying problems and analogous attempts to solve them, under the widest diversity of technical expression. They perpetually provoke us to deeper and more fearless thought, and they are as rich in impressive and even terrible warnings as they are in guidance and stimulation (p. 1).

With regard to the method of St. Thomas Aquinas I may perhaps be permitted to say a word. A vast amount of his work, notably the "Summa" is for the benefit of Christian students discussing their own system. Here his method is certainly not

The stern and prompt suppressing  
As an obvious deadly sin  
All the questioning and the guessing  
Of the soul's own soul within.

Rather is it the peremptory challenging of everything which claims to enter the temple of truth. Every conceivable objection—from Scripture, from the Fathers, from pagan philosophers, from pure reason—is urged fully and with perfect frankness against every dogma of revealed religion. And here naturally St. Thomas answers the objections from the standpoint of a Christian, with Divine Revelation as his final court of appeal. But it was necessary for him to adopt a very different standpoint in dealing with the Arabian philosophers. As Mohammedans they refused to admit either the Scriptures or Christian tradition as sources of revealed truth, and consequently in refuting the Arabians St. Thomas was thrown back upon the basis of pure reason. It was in this way that his great philosophical work, the "*Contra Gentiles*," came to be written, to establish by the light of reason the truths of the natural law and the moral necessity of revelation. In the "*Contra Gentiles*" and the "Summa" we have an unrivaled presentation of natural and revealed religion by one who was at once a great saint and a great scholar, and we ask you to make the acquaintance of these writings for several reasons.

#### ST. THOMAS'S EXCELLENCIES

First of all, in his writings there can be no bias or prejudice against religious bodies which are the outcome of the Reformation, since St. Thomas wrote centuries

before these bodies existed. His writings are high above the storm and stress of the religious controversies that distract this land today. I invite you, therefore, to read them and see what Christians really did believe before the disruption of Western Christendom. Surely we can find no better basis for Christian unity than the basis upon which the whole Western Church did actually take its stand. I have often wished that the masses in this country could have the opportunity of reading what St. Thomas Aquinas wrote. The Dominican translation of the "Summa" is beyond the means of the man in the street, and in any case he would not care to tackle such large volumes. One would like to see various points of Catholic teaching translated from St. Thomas and published in pamphlet form, the inside cover of each pamphlet setting forth who Aquinas was, and the all-important fact that he wrote before the disruption of Christendom, and consequently without bias against the modern sects. Such a plain exposition of what Christians believed before the disruption of the Reformation would surely pave the way to reunion.

Again I venture to say that members of every Christian body will find in the "Summa" many of their most cherished beliefs expressed far better than they can express them themselves. I am not alluding merely to the truths of natural religion or to the fact of a revelation, but to what are sometimes erroneously called distinctively Protestant doctrines: such doctrines as the Atonement, the Sacrifice of Calvary, the One Mediatorship of Christ, the workings of the Holy Spirit in the souls of men, and more especially the high authority of Scriptural proof.

But you will find more than that. You will find that in a great many theological questions you have absolute intellectual liberty. You will learn the vital distinction between the essentials of Christianity and the things that are not essential, and realize the importance of holding fast at all costs to those essentials. You will find in this most wonderful expression of Christian belief something that will make an irresistible appeal to the mind that conceives, and the heart that aspires after, Christian unity: you will find truth.

Now I would like to put to you the startling question

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What is the use of truth?" There are people in this country who tell you that speculative truth is of no use at all. That cannot be so. If we have got truth we have got something that can be translated into life and action, and in that precisely lies its use and its value. A truth of the abstract order, such a truth for instance as that any two sides of a triangle are together greater than the third, is translated into action by all of us when we hurry to the railway station to catch a train. So, too, with the truths of the speculative theology of Aquinas. If you tell me that these cannot be translated into action, I point to the humble followers of St. Francis of Assisi who lived them, or to the schools for the education of the masses which grew out of them, and which later developed into the great historic universities of Europe. Or I might point to Giotto and the whole school of Italian painters, or to the sublime Dante who was proud to acknowledge that he derived his inspiration from Aquinas. Or I might ask you to look upon the glorious Gothic Cathedrals which embodied the principles of Aquinas in stone; or ask you simply to look back through the noble ruins of the pre-Reformation churches and abbeys of this land, back through their shattered glories, to the living faith of those who built them.

I ask you then not to look to the dim distant future, full of uncertainties, with a vague hope that some blind evolution of forces will work out towards that unity which we all so earnestly desire. I bid you rather look back to that golden period of culture, thought and action, when the social fabric of Europe was based upon the concept of a religious unity than which in the history of Christianity no more perfect has ever been manifest. For the actual expression of that concept I have pointed to the works of that great synthetic genius, St. Thomas of Aquin.

With that so nobly realized ideal before our eyes, we may turn to the future with hope and confidence. An equally realizable ideal, the edifice of a no less perfect unity, glows before us through the present dimness and the mists. If we are ever to realize it, it will not be by building with loose stones and upon an unstable foundation. We must build with the same stones and upon the same foundation with which Aquinas built in the thirteenth century.

## Religion and Esthetic Appreciation

BROTHER LEO, F. S. C., L. H. D.

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THE vital aspect is the fundamental aspect in literary appreciation. Formal study and esthetic study both have their importance, but of themselves they lead not to the heart of books. For the heart of books is the heart of life, and he who would learn to know and evaluate any literary product which in any serious sense can claim consideration as a work of art must learn first to study it in its relations to life. Without the vital aspect literature becomes merely an ornamental thing like a molding or a utilitarian thing like an arch; the living word becomes a fossil. Fruitful study of literature recognizes the vital element therein; it recognizes the great books of the world as portraits and interpretations of the life of man.

And, similarly, the religious aspect is the fundamental aspect in life. Man has been bidden to seek first the Kingdom of God and His justice; and even were we disposed to ignore that command and the authority whence it comes, we could not, as consistent thinkers, ignore either its practical application or its philosophical validity. And turning alike from the Church and from the schools, and appealing to the experience of the race and the consensus of human experience, we should still recognize the importance, the fundamental importance, of the role played by religion alike in the history of nations and in the career of individual men. "The fool hath said in his heart, 'There is no God,'" is significant in its literary not less than in its religious implications; for in books as in life the height of absurdity is the denial of the claims of the Creator on the creature. The wasted life, the futile life is the non-religious life. It is such a life that, in the words of the world's master dramatist, is a tale told by an idiot, signifying nothing.

Religion and literature have, indeed, so many things in common and touch life simultaneously at so many points that they have been sometimes thought to be identical, or at least certain manifestations of religion and certain forms of literature have been assumed to be but one and the

same thing. Thus Professor George Santayana of Harvard University, states the essential idea of his book, "Poetry and Religion," in the following words from the preface:

. . . Religion and poetry are identical in essence, and differ merely in the way in which they are attached to practical affairs. Poetry is called religion when it intervenes in life, and religion, when it merely supervenes upon life, is seen to be nothing but poetry . . . As religion is deflected from its course when it is confused with a record of facts or of natural laws, so poetry is arrested in its development if it remains an unmeaning play of fancy without relevance to the ideals and purposes of life. In that relevance lies its highest power. As its elementary pleasantness comes from its response to the demands of the ear, so its deepest beauty comes from its response to the ultimate demand of the soul.

The two root statements of this paper, that the vital aspect in literature is its fundamental aspect and that the religious aspect in life is its fundamental aspect, suggest the root principles governing the making of books, the teaching of books and the appreciation of books. Writing, teaching and creative reading are all successful in the degree in which they recognize that literature interprets life and that religion illumines, explains and vivifies life.

The root principles thus drawn from the essential relations and inter-relations of life, literature and religion may be reduced to four: First, that religion is essential to the making of literature; secondly, that religion is a constructive force in literature; thirdly, that religion is in indispensable aid to the appreciation of literature; and, finally, that our appreciation of literature grows in proportion as our sense of religion widens and deepens.

#### RELIGION ESSENTIAL TO TRUE LITERATURE.

1. It must be conceded, of course, that a perception, however vivid and searching, of the religious implications of human life does not of itself guarantee a literary product, otherwise every hymn would be a poem, every tract would be a masterpiece, every sermon would be a work of art. The formal and the esthetic elements are necessary; but granted presence of manner and mood in a sufficiently ample measure, that presence will not of itself constitute literature. The vital element is likewise necessary, and the expression of the vital element is incomplete

and incoherent without a free and full recognition of the religious aspect of man's life and destiny. This theoretical view, the product of deductive reasoning, is validated by inductive observation. For all we need do is to pass in review the books and the authors that are accepted as classics, the books and the authors that are acknowledged to be surpassingly and permanently great, and we shall find in all of them and in each of them, despite difference in time and variety of mood and divergence of outlook, a recognition of religion and an insistence on the importance of the religious aspect in the life of man. The gods of Homer and Virgil have little in common with the gods of Dante and Calderon, and the moral preachments of the Book of Job are not always consonant with those of "Sartor Resartus"; but in every literary masterpiece, no matter by what hand penned or in what age produced, there is a voicing of religious ideals and a formulation of religious truths. This is so because, since the prime function of literature is to interpret life, it must perforce concern itself with what is, and ever has been, the dominant interest of life, the religious interest.

2. The presence of the religious element in the great books of the world must of necessity be admitted by all who know even superficially, the masterpieces of literature; but not all students accept that religious element as a positive, as a constructive force in either literature or life. Confronted with an epoch in history, like the Middle Ages, when the religious interest absorbs so much thought and vitality, some students might claim that but for religion the Middle Ages would have made more extensive and more beneficial contributions to civilization; confronted with an individual writer like Dante Alighieri, who so deeply and so minutely stresses many aspects of religious interest, they might exclaim, "That is precisely what is the matter with him!" Such critics recognize, as perforce they must, the magnitude of the role played by religion in human civilization and the invariable presence of religious elements in the great books of the world; but they are quick to argue that the world without religion would be a finer and happier world, that literature without religion would be a collection of greater books.



With the role played by religion in history we have here no immediate concern, but to the objectors who claim to find religion a destructive and debilitating force in either life or books, we need only analyze the data in the white light of truth. Let us face theories with facts. And, insofar as literature is concerned, insofar as any individual writer is concerned, the facts unmistakable and emphatically point to the conclusion that absorption in religious problems, devotion to religious issues and adherence to religious truths have aided rather than hindered the evolution of literature and the development of individual writers. We recall a literary form which at first sight seems to have the least connection with religion—the drama; yet even a hasty investigation of dramatic origins will demonstrate that the drama is indebted to religion for its very existence. In Greece, in Spain, even in England, when England was Merrie England, the drama was born at the foot of the altar.

And the constructive role played by religion in evolving a literary form is equally manifest in the growth and potency of individual writers, religion, specifically Catholicism, is the very warp and woof of one of the three supreme poets of all time, Dante! Was it a deterrent power, an inhibiting obsession, a ball and chain dragging at his ankle? Rather was it a liberating force, an inspiring enthusiasm, a pair of wings enabling him to transcend ordinary human experience and mount undaunted even unto the stars. Religion made Dante: and in proportion as, in one or other of its manifold manifestations, it appealed to them, it made likewise Sophocles and Plato, Shakespeare and Milton, Goethe and Moliere.

#### RELIGION ESSENTIAL FOR LITERARY APPRECIATION.

3. Dryasdust scholarship studies books from the outside; it busies itself with dates of publication, with parallel passages with masculine and feminine endings; it involves a rule-of-thumb process of criticism in which there is no spark of living reality. Vital scholarship, on the other hand, studies books from the inside; it follows the current of ideas, it recreates the moods in which those ideas had their source, it reconstructs by means of sympathetic

imagination the human life whence the books sprang and of which they are embodiments. Dryasdust scholarship may indeed proceed without any very keen and thrilling religious perceptions. But true, vital appreciation stands in need at every turn of the indispensable aids which religion, and religion alone, can furnish. Awareness of religion, sensitiveness to the appeals of religion, sympathy with the manifold manifestations of religion are indispensable to the study of books from the inside. Religion, as we have seen, has played a considerable part in the construction of the world's literature; religion must play a not less prominent part in the reconstruction of the world's literature.

As an instance: What, if not a religious interest, can enable us to evaluate, to appreciate Francis Thompson's "Hound of Heaven"? Without religious sympathies, without religious convictions, how could we possibly study that poem from the inside? How reconstruct the mood of its inception? How verify its essential truth to human life? To get at the heart of "The Hound of Heaven" we must realize what the eminent Protestant divine, Phillips Brooks, meant when he said, "The way to escape from God is to escape into Him"; we must recall the glowing tribute paid by Thomas à Kempis to the surpassing excellence of Divine love; we must meditate on the searching Scriptural saying that perfect love casteth out fear. Only then do we perceive that "The Hound of Heaven" is more than a bit of rhetorical efflorescence, more than a metrical symphony, more than a rhapsody of sound; only then do we perceive that the poem is a human document, a transcript of universal human experience, that it is, in Milton's scintillating and undying phrase, "the precious lifehood of a master spirit."

4. Our fourth principle governing the vital appreciation of literature in the light of religion is really a corollary of the third. For since religion helps us the better to understand and to reconstruct great books, obviously the more intimately we incorporate in ourselves the spirit of religion the richer is our equipment for literary study. To study literature, to teach literature is in a sense to re-make literature. Religion helped in the making; it must help as well in the re-making.

Here, as I see it, is the teeming advantage of the Catholic teacher and the Catholic school. For the Catholic teacher is by profession a religious, a person who carries the principles of religious perfection into fruitful practise by means of his vows and his rules and his religious spirit; and the Catholic school is an institution upreared and sustained through devotion to religion, an institution which finds in religion the very reason for its existence. Given the requisite scholarly equipment, given the necessary technical skill, I can conceive of no better teacher of literature than the Catholic teacher. Within the classroom of the Catholic school he is free to impart to his pupils a comprehension of vital criticism in its theory and its practise, a zest and an enthusiasm for books as reproductions of life and commentaries on life.

But in order that we may read literature and teach literature with due insistence on its vital connotations it is imperative that day by day, hour by hour, moment by moment, we learn more about God and the things of God. In the great books of the world sincerity is the virtue paramount; in them the little reticences and hypocrisies and dissimulations of daily intercourse are thrust aside and the human soul stands forth in the sight of God, gloriously naked as once Adam and Eve walked in Paradise. The student, the teacher must re-capture that sublime sincerity, must learn to strip life of its unessentials, must grasp the heavenly secret of seeing things as they are in truth. Seeing things as they are in truth is of the very essence of religion.

## Galileo's Case in a Nutshell

PETER FINLAY, S.J.

TAKE, for instance, the case of Galileo, which the less well-informed Protestant controversialist was accustomed to make much of as an argument against the infallibility of the Pope. I put the bare central facts of the case: Galileo taught the Copernican theory, which we all admit today, that the earth not only revolves on its own axis once in every twenty-four hours, but also

moves round the sun once in every year. The theory ran counter to the received opinions of the time; it was thought by many to stand condemned by the plain language of Holy Scripture, which speaks of the rising and going down of the sun, which tells us how the sun "stood still" in the heavens at the command of Joshua, and which again and again represents God as "laying the foundations of the earth." The controversy was taken over by the Holy See. The Congregation of the Index, with the Pope as its president, declared Galileo's doctrine to be false, opposed to the teaching of Scripture, not to be tolerated among Catholics, and the Congregation exacted from him a retraction of his view.

We omit the details of the story, and the fables which have gathered round it. We are concerned here with one thing only: the Roman Index, presided over by the Pope, condemned the Copernican theory as false and repugnant to Revelation; and the Roman Index was wrong. The Copernican theory has triumphed; there is no one to call its truth in question today. But was there any conflict between faith and reason? Was Divine faith, was Church infallibility, involved in the controversy? Undoubtedly the Roman Index believed they were; I have no doubt the Pope himself shared in the belief. But the Roman Index is not an infallible tribunal. Papal infallibility is a personal privilege, which the Pope has no power to communicate; he cannot even himself bring it into operation while he acts only as president or chairman of a Roman Congregation. In Rome itself the decision was never looked upon as final and irrevocable; it was never held to be an infallible interpretation of the Scriptures; no one dreamed of maintaining that it was to be assented to by an act of Divine faith. Some theologians, some Cardinals, the Pope himself as head of a Congregation, were mistaken in the meaning which they assigned to passages of Holy Scripture; but there was no exercise, and so no error of Church infallibility; there was no conflict of faith and reason.